

Chapter 2. INVOLVING PEOPLE FACE-TO-FACE THROUGH MEETINGS

C. TAKING INITIAL ACTION STEPS

Face-to-face contact and two-way communication are vital elements of public involvement. Meetings can provide both. Here are some steps an agency can take to get people together:

- ✓ **Meet with community groups to discuss and set up a meeting schedule.**
Contact community groups to establish a basic meeting schedule. Optimize participation by asking them what kinds of meetings should take place and how often they should occur.
- ✓ **Consider the scope and substance of meetings.**
Outline the goals of a meeting or series of meetings in advance, so that participants can comment and offer suggestions. Consider if general meetings need to be supplemented by meetings focused on specific topics for specialized audiences. Share findings and ask if further development or discussion of individual points is desirable. Explain how and when agency decisions are made and how meeting output will affect decisions.
- ✓ **Select organizing principles for the meeting(s).**
Explore different types of meetings that may attract interest and outline potential meeting structures, so that maximum participation occurs. Vary sponsorship or leadership of meetings.
- ✓ **Place the meeting in the context of the whole plan or program, including decision-making.**
Anticipate where the process will go and why. Determine from the beginning what information is needed, when it is needed, and how it will be incorporated into agency decision-making. Make this context clear to participants, so they understand how their input will affect the plan or project.
- ✓ **Evaluate the approach with participant advisors.**
Seek perceptions and advice on the process from people outside the agency. Evaluate whether the intended scope, substance, and style of meeting are likely to be beneficial to the agency itself and to the participants.